

Iran-Contra Prober Walsh Lashes Dole

By Walter Pincus and Susan Schmidt
Washington Post Staff Writers

Former Iran-contra prosecutor Lawrence E. Walsh yesterday accused Republican presidential nominee Robert J. Dole of "hypocrisy" in demanding that President Clinton say he won't pardon individuals convicted in the Whitewater scandal after Dole was "the foremost advocate" of pardoning former defense secretary Caspar W. Weinberger for his role in Iran-contra.

"Dole's profession of public concern about what President Clinton might do sharply contrasts with his action during the investigation of Cabinet officers in the Iran-contra affair," Walsh said in a statement released yesterday along with two chapters from his book "Firewall," which is scheduled to be published next spring.

The chapters describe how Dole as Senate minority leader sharply criticized Walsh's investigation because of what he called its partisan bias and called on President George Bush to pardon Weinberger after one of the counts against him was dismissed by a federal judge in September 1992.

Weinberger was indicted on June 16, 1992, on five counts of obstruction of Congress, false statements and perjury. Walsh filed a new count against Weinberger just days before the presidential election, and the trial was scheduled to begin in January 1993. But on Dec. 24, 1992, Bush pardoned the former defense secretary and five others who had been either indicted or convicted in the Iran-contra affair.

Asked why the book excerpts were released on the eve of the final presidential debate, Walsh said yesterday: "The story was out and in fairness to everyone the publisher decided to release [them] today. . . . It was not the way I wanted it."

Walsh drew a contrast in noting Dole's attempt "to exploit President Clinton's connection with long ago business trans-

actions that ended before he became president while Dole, himself, had urged pardons for crimes of constitutional dimension committed in office by a Reagan Cabinet officer."

Dole campaign spokeswoman Christina Martin said Walsh's "understanding of the issue appears to have been clouded by the opportunity for a little self-promotion and money-making."

In his book, Walsh recounts how Dole accused him of overspending on his investigation and in late November 1992 called for a Senate investigation into whether the Iran-contra prosecutor had "colluded with the Clinton campaign." In December 1992, Dole sought a list of Walsh employees over the past six years and shortly thereafter four Republican senators unsuccessfully called for Attorney General William P. Barr to appoint an independent counsel to investigate the Walsh investigation.

Dole has repeatedly criticized the president—most recently yesterday in a speech in California—for allegedly leaving the door open to issuing presidential pardons for his former Whitewater business partners, James B. and Susan McDougal, and former Arkansas governor Jim Guy Tucker (D). All were convicted earlier this year in a case growing out of Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr's investigation.

An issue was a remark Clinton made Sept. 23 in an interview with Jim Lehrer on PBS. Clinton was asked about the possibility of pardons for Tucker and the McDougals and responded: "I have given no consideration to that." The president then went on to say that their cases "are still on appeal" and "should be handled like others." He said there was a regular process for pardons in which he reviewed cases as they come up to him after an evaluation by the Justice Department.

"And that's how I think it should be handled," Clinton said.